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Page: _____

Cicione hits 'jobs program'

In his first shot across the bow as state Republican Party chairman, **Giovanni Cicione** slammed the State House "jobs program for North Providence politicians."

Cicione was responding to a report in last week's Political Scene about the hiring by Senate President **Joseph A. Montalbano** of North Providence Town Council president **Joseph Burchfield** as a \$50,132-a-year "constituent liaison." With Burchfield's hiring, four of the seven North Providence councilmen now hold state-paid jobs.

Said Cicione: "While the state is facing a 300-million-dollar deficit, there is a federal investigation looking into overly cozy relationships between legislators and lobbying interests at the State House, [and] we have a Senate president treating the General Assembly payroll as a North Providence jobs program."

"Padding his staff with political allies from his hometown is just another example of the arrogant abuse of the state payroll by top Democrats. It is amazing they are willing to shamelessly foist more non-essential patronage jobs on the people of Rhode Island."

Cicione's Democratic counterpart, **William J. Lynch**, was busy slamming Republican Governor **Carcieri** for end-running state hiring rules by paying a private temporary-employment agency, from out-of-state, a premium to place hundreds of workers in unposted state jobs.

"This is cronyism at its worst," said Lynch, suggesting Carcieri did not advertise the openings — which included CFO at the state Department of Transportation — so he could hire "anyone he wants, qualified or unqualified, with no public scrutiny or oversight." (There was no immediate response from the Carcieri administration.)

Responding through a spokesman, Montalbano, D-North Providence, said Burchfield's experience as a councilman made him "exceptionally qualified" to help "the constituents of the various senators." Noting that Burchfield is the only current member of the North Providence council he has hired — another works for the prisons and two more for new Secretary of State and former North Providence Mayor **A. Ralph Mollis** — he suggested Cicione "get his facts straight" before issuing any more press releases."